



Quarterly report:  
**Actions and Initiatives**





OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHÉ  
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



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## Quarterly Update 4 (January – March 2024)

Name of organisation/group: University of Galway

Date: January – March 2024

Please provide an update on the initiatives and activities your organisation/group has undertaken to promote, make use of and contribute to the SDGs in the last quarter:

### Introduction and Report Format

The University of Galway's approach to embedding the SDGs centres on a [Learn-Live-Lead](#) model. The focus of **learn** is to continue to embed SDG literacy into all aspects of university learning and research. The focus of **live** is to implement the principles of the SDGs through campus operations and engagement activities. From a **lead** perspective, the aim is to play a central and transformative role in attaining the SDGs by 2030. Our *Learn-Live-Lead* model is organised around six key themes: Research & Learning; Energy & Greenhouse Gas Emissions; Nature & Ecosystems; Health & Wellbeing; Built Environment; and Governance & Leadership.

We recognise that reporting is an important part of assessing our progress towards achieving the SDGs. As SDG Champion, we publish a quarterly report showcasing our activities and work. The reports are structured on our Learn-Live-Lead model and each initiative highlighted, details the SDGs that initiative is seeking to progress. This is our fourth and final SDG quarterly report as National SDG Champion: the report captures the time frame January–March 2024.

### LEARN

#### University of Galway led global research team developing solutions for food systems in Vietnam.

An international research team led by University of Galway is working in partnership with stakeholders in Vietnam to enable marginalised urban populations to be able to access healthier, more affordable, and more sustainable food and diets. The *EcoFoodSystems* project is conducting research on city regional dietary transitions with food systems organisations and institutions in the south-east Asian country. Vietnam has a population of 99 million – half of whom now live in urban areas. It is estimated that by 2050 three quarters of the country's population will be living in urban areas. This EU and UN funded project is specifically focused on working with partners to help improve the health of people and communities that are nutritionally marginalised because of their diets. *EcoFoodSystems* is led by the Director of University of Galway's Ryan Institute, in partnership with Alliance Bioversity - The International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT); Wageningen University and Research in the Netherlands and the international NGO Rikolto in Vietnam



### Improving access and learning for people with intellectual disability.

University of Galway has secured funding to improve access to higher education and learning for people with an intellectual disability. The funding will be used to put in place a new programme for students with an intellectual disability called *Cumas - a Foundational Certificate in Learning and Community*. The aim of the programme is to provide students with a third level learning experience which will develop their knowledge, social engagement, and employment prospects. University of Galway students on *Cumas* will take part in social activities and academic classes with students without intellectual disabilities as well as participating in classes with other students with intellectual disabilities. The programme will provide students with work experience through placement opportunities. While the primary aims of the programme caters to the students and their needs, it is also envisioned that the University of Galway community and the wider community will benefit by developing a greater understanding and appreciation of the potential of people with intellectual disabilities. The funding is being provided to progress the National Access Plan which highlights the need to improve and increase representation in higher education for students with a disability, including students with autism and those with an intellectual disability.



### University of Galway projects supported by EPA to address climate and environmental challenges.

Four academics at University of Galway have been awarded funding from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for projects to address climate and environment challenges. The research covers the areas of air quality; radioactive material in building products; climate resilience cities for bridges; and optimising resources. Projects include *Towards a Climate Resilient Adapted National Network of Bridges*; *Sources of PM2.5 in the Air of Irish Towns*; *Investigation of naturally occurring radioactive material (NORM) in building materials in Ireland* and *Framework for Optimising Resources through Strategic Environmental Assessment*. It is envisaged that the projects will address knowledge gaps, both current and future, to provide robust evidence to support the implementation of effective environmental policies in Ireland.



### Record-breaking testing reveals potential for next generation marine turbine.

University of Galway has announced successful testing of a next generation marine hydrokinetic turbine foil for renewable energy. The tests were led by the *Sustainable and Resilient Structures Research Group* at University of Galway, which is part of the Enterprise Ireland-supported technology centre [Construct Innovate](#) and the University's [Ryan Institute](#). The 5m long foil is made from high-performance, carbon fibre reinforced polymer. It is shaped similarly to an airplane wing. When placed perpendicular to river or tidal currents, the foils spin under that force and the technology sends clean, renewable energy via an underwater generator. Three of these foils combine in each of two turbines in the 80kW RivGen marine hydrokinetic energy device. The technology underwent intense stress testing in the University's Large Structures Testing Laboratory to demonstrate its ability to withstand operational loads over its design lifetime. It is envisaged that the combination of high-level design (ORPC Ireland) and fabrication (Éire

Composites) with University of Galway's testing will improve the reliability of river and tidal energy devices as they move closer to commercial viability.



Dr William Finnegan, James McHale, Ciarán Kennedy and Tennis Ranjan with the carbon fibre reinforced polymer foil which forms part of the RivGen marine hydrokinetic energy turbine. Credit - Martina Regan

### Report on our scientific understanding of climate change and its effects on Ireland.

Academics at the Irish Centre for High-End Computing (ICHEC) and University of Galway have played a key role in Ireland's first comprehensive report on our scientific understanding of climate change and its effects on Ireland. The objective of *Ireland's Climate Change Assessment Report* is to deliver a comprehensive report on our understanding of climate change; the option to respond to the challenges it poses; to identify opportunities that may arise from the planned transition to a climate neutral, biodiversity-rich, environmentally sustainable and climate resilient economy and society. ICHEC worked to research existing science and write an extended report on adaptation research and policy in Ireland. Also contributing to the ICCA Report from University of Galway were academics from the School of Geography, Archaeology, and Irish Studies; Ryan Institute; School of Natural Sciences; and School of Physics. Key findings from the ICCA Report found that Ireland's climate is changing, and it will be the reality until excessive greenhouse gases cease and a new climate equilibrium is achieved. The report also states that although early concerted action can limit global temperatures by the end of the century, sea levels will continue to rise beyond 2100.



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## Developing solutions to ensure the delivery of regular and elective patient care in a health emergency.

A new research project being pioneered by University of Galway is to develop solutions to ensure the seamless delivery of regular and elective patient care in a health emergency such as a pandemic. The RAPIDE research project (Regular and Unplanned Care Adaptive Dashboard for Cross-border Emergencies) is being undertaken following the award of a €6 million grant through Horizon Europe and involves a consortium of 13 partners from Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Italy, Slovenia, Malta and Estonia. One of the aims of the research project is to set new standards for fostering resilience and preparedness for future health emergencies, including how digital technologies can offer solutions for care in the home and outside of hospitals and clinics. Researchers will also measure the impact of delayed or unmet care during a health emergency such as a pandemic. The research will look back on the COVID-19 pandemic to measure the impact of delayed or unmet care for conditions such as strokes, heart attacks, diabetes, and cancer treatment. It will also assess the delivery of regular care across hospital, primary care, and home-based settings.



## Conference promotion event on campus in partnership with fellow SDG Champion, Fáilte Ireland.

The University of Galway Conference and Events team showcased opportunities and supports for minimising the environmental impacts of conference hosting, with a panel discussion including the Fáilte Ireland Inaugural Spotlight on Sustainability Award winner, Dr Kathy Reilly, and Fáilte Ireland Business Development Officer, Patrice O'Mahony. Attendees were given practical tips and advice on how to reduce the carbon footprint of their conferences and were encouraged to use the University of Galway Sustainable Event Checklist when planning conferences and large events.



## LIVE

### Students' Union led Wasted Week 2024

Student led 'Wasted Week 2024' at University of Galway included a weeklong series of events exploring areas ranging from food waste and recycling to fast fashion and examining the impact waste has on the environment. Examples of events hosted throughout the week (29<sup>th</sup> January to 2<sup>nd</sup> February) included: an upcycling clothes workshop; a circular economy workshop; beach clean-up; a waste free potluck event; and a 'recycling on campus' awareness event. Speaking at the launch of Wasted Week 2024 Students' Union Environmental and Sustainability Officer Molly Hickey said: "It's fantastic to have the support of our student societies for Wasted week. University of Galway students are very climate conscious and want to play their part in making Galway and the world a better place for us all."



### University of Galway celebrates Irish Traveller Ethnicity Week

University of Galway celebrated Irish Traveller Ethnicity Week with a week-long series of events across campus ending on March 1<sup>st</sup> - marking the anniversary of the Government formally recognising Irish Travellers as a distinct ethnic group and celebrating their culture and heritage including music, craft traditions and language. Highlights from the programme included: **The Michael McDonagh Award** presented at the opening ceremony to a staff member who has shown leadership in promoting Irish Traveller History & Culture; **Traveller Living Exhibition** showcasing the rich cultural heritage of Irish Traveller life in the 1950s; **Traveller Education and Anti-racism talk** by Dr Hannagh McGinley, a member of the Irish Traveller community, who talks about her journey through education and working life; **Galway Traveller Movement display** sharing stories of five Leaving Certificate students and their school experiences as members of the Irish Traveller Community; **Story Telling and Music**; **Mincéirs Whiden Society Coffee Morning**; and **Traveller History and Culture discussion** led by the University’s Traveller Education Officer. The week also included a series of events to highlight the supports available to students, including information sessions on the University of Sanctuary programme and on pathways into and through education.



### Sean- Nós in Residence at University of Galway

University of Galway’s *Centre for Irish Studies* has appointed Mairéad Ní Fhlatharta, as Sean-Nós Singer-in-Residence for 2024. Mairéad will deliver a series of workshops at University of Galway throughout the year; the workshops are free and open to the public. The living link with the sean-nós song tradition and other aspects of the vernacular arts of the Conamara Gaeltacht are a key element of the work being carried out by the Centre for Irish Studies at University of Galway. Celebrating and preserving song tradition contributes to several SDGs. Communities can reinforce cultural identities (SDG 11); transmit knowledge across generations (SDG 4); and strengthen community cohesion and resilience (SDG 16). This project is funded by Ealaín na Gaeltachta, Údarás na Gaeltachta and An Chomhairle Ealaíon in association with the Centre for Irish Studies at University of Galway.



### The Nelson Mandela Anti Racism Week

The *Nelson Mandela Anti-Racism Week* at University of Galway was launched by Zak Moradi, a Kurdish-Irish hurler and author of *Life Begins in Leitrim*. The week-long programme of events coincided with *International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination*, observed each year on March 21st. Highlights for the week included the inaugural *Tom Molineaux Elite Athlete Scholarship* for ethnic minority students in honour of the slave who boxed his way to freedom and is buried in Galway. The programme also commemorated the 21st anniversary of Nelson Mandela being awarded an honorary doctorate by University of Galway in 2003. Marking the historic day, South African Ambassador

to Ireland, Mabet van Rensburg, delivered a keynote address at the University on Friday March 22nd, which was followed by a panel discussion entitled ‘*Strengthening Relations Between University of Galway and South Africa*’. Other distinguished speakers during the week included Dr Mads Gilbert who delivered a lecture on ‘*Health Apartheid in Palestine*’ and Francesca Albanese and Maha Abdallah who discussed the situation in Gaza and the ‘*Implications of South Africa’s Genocide Case at the International Court of Justice*’. Other events hosted throughout the week included workshops, exhibitions, live music concerts, race equality training, interactive sessions, seminars, and panel discussions. The full programme of events is documented [here](#).



At the launch of University of Galway’s Nelson Mandela Anti-Racism Week were, from left, students Tianming Yao and Malik Thiam; University of Galway President Professor Ciarán Ó hÓgartaigh; Zak Moradi, a Kurdish-Irish hurler and author of *Life Begins in Leitrim*; Prof Ciara Meehan, University of Galway’s Dean of Students, and Suad Mooge, Youth Leader and Coach, Sports Against Racism Ireland. Credit – Aengus McMahon

## LEAD

### University of Galway hosts national SDG Champions

University of Galway hosted the Government of Ireland national Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Champions on campus for a collaborative, interactive meeting, on the themes of Climate Action (SDG 13) and Partnerships (SDG17). The day’s events included flash presentations on a range of University of Galway climate projects, including Peatlands and People; student led sustainability initiatives; Galway National Park City; and Partnership with the Mary Robinson Centre. Other highlights included a guided walk along the University of Galway Biodiversity and SDG Trails; an outline of the Geofit project; a workshop on Climate Engagement led by IPSOS Ireland; an introduction to SDG Geohive by Táihte Eireann and presentations by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications; and the University of Galway’s Sustainability Office. The meeting was a great opportunity for SDG Champions to work together, share knowledge and learn from best practice examples of activities and partnerships taking place across the country, to achieve Agenda 2030. The event took place in [IdeasLab](#), University of Galway’s student Innovation hub. Catering on the day was provided by [Saol Café](#), a social inclusion café on the University of Galway campus.

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## University of Galway hosts family fun day for Engineers Week 2024

Organised by University of Galway's School of Engineering as part of Engineers Week 2024, which celebrates engineering across Ireland, *Engineering Our Future: Family Fun Day* took place on March 2, 2024 in the Alice Perry Engineering Building. The event included an array of science and engineering shows, film screenings, workshops, and hands-on activities to inspire both the young and the old. Throughout the day families had an opportunity to build their own wind turbine; gain a basic understanding of the role and structure of cells and DNA with Cell Explorers; build a biomaterial using slime; have fun with 3D printing; learn how to repair bicycles from An Mheitheal Rothar; explore the GEEC: Galway Energy Efficient Car; have fun in the LEGO or STEM play areas; or take some timeout in the sensory room. This was a free event, open to all, show casing the world of civil, environmental, mechanical, biomedical, electronic, energy systems and computer engineering.



## Student Sustainability Leadership Awards 2024

To advance SDG-related projects, the University of Galway launched the Student Sustainability Leadership Awards programme 2024. The programme recognises the leading role that students play in the transition to a sustainable future and aim to support student leaders that are dedicated and enthusiastic about developing a more sustainable campus and community. The Awards programme was advertised extensively across student platforms. An unprecedented number of very high calibre applications were received. Shortlisted applicants were invited to attend a short interview. Internships were awarded two University of Galway students; Molly Hickey from Laois is a BA with Human Rights student and Peter O'Neill from Galway is a commerce student. Molly and Peter will each receive a €4,000 prize and will participate in an 8-week internship with the Sustainability Office this summer.



## Fourth Galway City Youth Climate Action Assembly

The primary aim of the Galway Youth Climate Assembly is to increase youth awareness of and participation in decision-making in relation to climate action policies. All secondary schools in Galway City as well as Oranmore are participating.

Led by Galway National Park City, the *Fourth* Galway City Youth Climate Action Assembly was hosted by ATU where secondary schools presented and exhibited on their sustainability, climate, and biodiversity themed projects. Transport was the main theme of the day and students heard from a range of speakers including sustainability themed transport initiatives by the University of Galway, Galway City Council and Gluas (a pun on 'Galway' and 'Luas'), an organisation advocating for a Very Light Rail sustainable public transport system in Galway City. Students were given the opportunity to offer their solutions to implement a safe pedestrian and cycling friendly city-wide transport infrastructure including an enhanced public transport network.



### Shortlisted for the Irish Education Awards *Sustainability* category.

University of Galway has been shortlisted in The Irish Education Awards *Excellence in Sustainability* category. This award recognises the Irish-based third level institution, technical training college or organisation that can best demonstrate an initiative or project which shows a commitment to sustainability. The shortlisting recognises University commitment to sustainability and to progressing the SDGs. The winner will be announced at a live gala awards ceremony taking place on April 25th, 2024, at Killashee Hotel, Kildare.



### Regional Business Summit

The annual Regional Business Summit for the West of Ireland was hosted by University of Galway for the second year in a row, with a focus on addressing business challenges in the region. The event was organised by J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics, in collaboration with Galway Chamber, itag - the technology community in the western region, and Data 2 Sustain. The Summit provided research-informed insights and practical advice on how businesses can be more innovative and how to respond to current and future challenges. This year's summit focused on digitalisation at speed and responsible technology; scaling a business with lessons from indigenous companies and multinationals; and sustainable finance. The sustainable finance panel addressed the challenges of integrating environmental, social, and governance (ESG) considerations into financial systems and directing investments towards more sustainable economic activities. The panel brought together multiple perspectives - banking, business, and academia - to address the critical drivers, implications, and importance of accessing finance based on sustainable practices.





At the National SDG Champions showcase event on the University of Galway campus were (L-R) Dr John Caulfield, Director of Strategy Implementation; Michelle O' Dowd Lohan, Community and University Sustainability Officer; Aisling Kirwan and Fiona Mc Manus, Department of Environment Climate and Communications; Dr Richard Manton, Director of Sustainability. Credit Aengus McMahon



University of Galway welcomes 20 National SDG Champions from a diverse range of organisations across Ireland.

Credit - Aengus Mc Mahon



Tin Smith Tom McDonnell celebrating Irish Traveller Ethnicity Week at the University of Galway. Credit - Aengus McMahon



University of Galway calling Superhero Engineers to come to campus on Saturday March 2 for a Family Fun Day to explore engineering. Credit - Magdalena Hajdukiewicz



Dean Kenny, SU President; Molly Hickey, SU Environmental & Sustainability Officer at the launch of Wasted Week 2024



Participants at the University of Galway led *EcoFoodSystems* Project Multistakeholder Research Prioritisation Workshop. Hanoi, 24th Jan 2024.